



December 27, 2016

Vice President-Elect Mike Pence
Chairman
Trump-Pence Transition Executive Committee
1717 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Re: USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Final Rule allowing Importation of Fresh Lemons from Northwest Argentina into the Continental United states

Dear Vice President-Elect Pence,

Western Growers is an agricultural trade association representing California, Arizona, and Colorado growers, packers, and shippers of fresh fruit vegetables, and tree nuts, including citrus.

In spite of significant concerns and objections raised by U.S. citrus growers, on December 20, 2016, APHIS published a final rule that will allow for the importation of fresh lemons from Argentina. We strongly encourage the Trump Administration to reconsider and overturn this rule after taking office in January.

There remain industry questions and concerns about the timing of the site visit by USDA, and whether political considerations unduly influenced the timing of this approval. Based on the previous pest risk assessment, which was not updated for this decision, there are 9 pests associated with Citrus spp. in Argentina, which were determined to be of quarantine significance for the United States. Of these pests, four of the pests are considered to have a high pest risk potential *Ceratitis capitata*, *Cryptoblabes gnidiella*, and *Gymnandrosoma aurantianum* are rated high. The other five pests identified are considered by APHIS to have a medium risk potential.

Western Growers urges the new Administration to reconsider this perilous rule. By moving forward with this proposal APHIS is placing our industry in a potentially precarious economic situation, as APHIS has failed to demonstrate to the industry that it has adhered to its commitment to safeguard the California and Arizona agricultural industry.

Sincerely,

Tom Nassif
President and CEO